

Abstract 202

TITLE: A Comparison of Estimates and Trends in Adolescent Sexual Behaviors in Four Nationally Representative Surveys.

AUTHORS: Santelli, JS; Lindberg LD; Abma J; Sucoff C (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta and Hyattsville; Urban Institute, Washington, DC; and U of Minnesota, Minneapolis)

OBJECTIVE: Accurate information on temporal variation in adolescent sexual behavior is essential to understand trends in adolescent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and to monitor the progress of health promotion activities in the U.S. This analysis compares estimates in recent national trends in key sexual behaviors and prevalence estimates among national surveys.

DESIGN: Data from the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), National Survey of Adolescent Males (NSAM), Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), and National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescents (Add Health) were compared. NSFG and NSAM were conducted in 1988 and 1995, YRBS in 1991, 1993, 1995, and 1997, and Add Health in 1995. While methodology and populations vary, common subpopulations in each survey system are adolescents 15-17 years who are attending school. Investigators from each survey system developed coding schemes to compare data. Analyses were conducted separately by gender and race/ethnicity.

RESULTS: Similar temporal trends were found across surveillance systems for a decline in reporting ever having sexual intercourse for males and increases in condom use for males. For several behaviors, significant trends were found in one survey system only. These included an increase in condom use among females (YRBS only), a decrease in oral contraceptive use among females (NSFG only), a decrease in sexual partners in past 3 months among males (YRBS only), and a decrease in lifetime partners among males (YRBS only). Similar non-significant trends were found in the comparable systems. Prevalence estimates in 1995 were significantly different across surveys for ever had sexual intercourse (males and females), sexual intercourse in past 3 months (females), use of oral contraceptives (males), use of condoms (females) and 2+ sexual partners in the past 3 months (males).

CONCLUSIONS: The data suggest that while similar temporal trends are found in these surveillance systems, estimates across survey systems are not directly comparable. Suggested explanations for these differences include different question wording and context, different modes of data collection, limited statistical power, and different sampling design. These findings suggest a need for an improved understanding of methodological effects in survey research with adolescents.

PRESENTER CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: John S. Santelli

Address: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road, NE, Mailstop K33
Atlanta, Georgia 30333

Telephone: (770) 4883212

Fax: (770) 488-3112

E-mail: jfs8@cdc.gov